

We claim:

1. A device for sensing an object or a person in an interior of a vehicle, comprising:

a sensor for sensing an object or a person in an interior of a vehicle;

a memory;

a control device for a vehicle occupant protection means, said control device outputting a control command; and

a control unit connected to said memory for storing data in said memory upon receiving a corresponding control command from said control device, said control unit causing an impact code received via an interface to be stored in said memory.

2. The device according to claim 1, wherein the data to be stored in said memory are sensor data or data derived therefrom.

3. The device according to claim 2, wherein the sensor data stored in said memory are sensor data having been recorded last or data derived therefrom.

4. The device according to claim 1, wherein the memory is a nonvolatile memory.

5. A vehicle occupant protection apparatus, comprising:

a control device for a vehicle occupant protection device configured to output a control command;

an impact sensing device connected to said control device; and

a device for sensing an object or a person in the interior of a vehicle according to claim 1 disposed spatially separate from and connected to said control device for receiving the control command output by said control device.

6. The apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said control device is programmed to output the control command if the vehicle occupant protection means is triggered.

7. The apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said control device is configured to output the control command as a function of an impact signal of said impact sensing device.

8. The apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said control device is configured to output the control command if a start of an impact is detected when an impact signal exceeds a given threshold value.

9. A method for sensing an object or a person in the interior of a vehicle, which comprises:

sensing with a sensor whether an object or a person is in the interior of the vehicle;

supplying sensor data to a control device, arranged spatially separate from the sensor, for a vehicle occupant protection means;

storing the sensor data in a device containing the sensor when there is a corresponding control command supplied to the device, wherein the sensor data are stored if the vehicle occupant protection means is to be triggered or is triggered.

10. The method according to claim 9, wherein the sensor data to be stored in the memory are sensor data or data derived therefrom.

11. The method according to claim 9, which comprises storing the sensor data if the start of an impact is detected.

12. The method according to claim 9, which comprises terminating the storing step if the vehicle occupant protection means has not been triggered.